



2006: The 25th Anniversary Year of the Criminalization of Reproductive Physical and Digital Media

Dust sits piled on top the sky scraping leviathans. Those sentinels heaving upwards. Those golems, to protect those of us stuck at eye level. If you look real close, you can still see the barren carcasses that hang from the corners. Butchered like deer, left as a monument to rejection. The people here done said no more pictures.

The city of New Babel, Virginia wakes. The Meatsmen, highly esteemed laborers of the restaurant industry, pound the beef they'll be flipping for the next five hours. Spark Heads and Engineers from the Stone District wait patiently to collect yesterdays grease. They'll take it back to their studios to power their various doohickeys, all claiming to have discovered the next big thing. Cyclists finish their morning routes in groups of six or seven. The cars are on their way in from out of town. The Ebbing's Canals heave smoothly through Doper's Aisle, a pre-revolutionary misnomer for the nooks and crannies where artisans and musicians still spend their time. Filmmakers and photographers lurk in bushes and behind dumpsters, ready to snap students on their way to 8am classes. The lucky of them will walk home with a discreet pack slung over their shoulder and an SD card full of tomorrow's masterpieces. The unlucky, will be caught by particularly perceptive pupils with eyes for lenses, who will in turn chase the vagabonds out of their perches. Here comes one of those unlucky souls now.

Huey races down a jagged sidewalk. He leaps over valleys and mountains of brick, barely staying upright. He hastily swings a flowery shoulder bag to his front and crams his camera deep into the bag, before slinging the thing over his shoulder and regaining his footing. 2 students follow him at a seemingly pallbearer's pace, yelling at him to never come back.

Huey's feet drop him at the back door of a small house. He pounds on the door. It swings open and he darts inside.

“Huey what the fuck.” A friendly figure exclaims. Huey drops to the floor and lays on his back.

He mutters between deep gasps, “Students... saw my camera... had to run.”

“You jackass. You brought those animals here?!” His face was turning red now. He darts to the window to peek through the closed plastic blinds.

“No...” Huey spits out while sitting up. “I lost them around Seventh and Jackson. They were no athletes.”

“You’ve gotta stop shooting around campus, man. This is like the third time this week you’ve been ran out.”

“No no. I’m just getting sloppy with choosing my perch spots. I need to do more research.” Huey states. He pulls his camera out of his bag and begins to flip through the roll.

“Where does everyone else stay?”

“I don’t know. I can never quite spot anyone else.”

“Well you’d better tighten up. One of these days the track team is gonna catch you. Can’t you take off and shoot trees and rocks and shit for a few weeks?”

“A few weeks?! John I just got this camera. I’m not gonna waste the most important 5 weeks of development of my understanding of this technology on dead branches. I have things to say and I want to say them as soon as I can!” Huey has still not pulled his focus from the display screen on his camera.

“But you can say anything you want once the documentation ordinance is over. The vote is only in 6 weeks.” John looks back out the window, clearly still frazzled by Huey’s abrupt entrance.

Huey whips his head up to look John in the eye. “Oh come on now. You know that referendum isn’t gonna change anything. This city issue hooked on oil and clay that, I mean, look at Davis Gutierrez.”

“Yeah well, well, ah shit man.”

“Everybody here loves him still. They hang off his every word. Off that entertainment rollercoaster bullshit.” He goes back to scrolling through photos. “And it’s not like people don’t know about the pimping shit. Nobody cares.”

“Yeah, yeah you’re right.” John says, turning back to Huey.

Cut to black.

Camera Flash.

Lightning strike.

A branch smacks into water. The ripples reflect the turbulent world around them, held at a distance by the filmic layer of the surface of the river. The branch breaks in half, and continues down the stream. It flows slowly and carefully, slowly the two pieces get further and further apart.

Huey waits on a wet and sandy bank for the stick. His hand rests about halfway into the reflecting pool. The stick passes him by and reaches for it, before grabbing it to pull out of the water. He smacks it on the ground to crack it into fourths, then tosses it back into the river as if finishing a mediocre task. He stands and turns his back before the stick begins to drift.

Huey’s photographs appear on screen in a montage. They are accompanied by a melancholic yet triumphant champion sound. His memories begin to bleed into his photography, as his photographs continue to illuminate his memories.

Cut to black.

A woman stands at the front of a small lecture hall in a blue dress. Only about 8 or 9 students makeup the audience. The woman speaks with authority from behind a podium.

“Though his foray into cinema was brief, it must be remarked that Hubert Light-Friedman’s work with the moving image was some of the only cinematic work created in the 35 years of the criminalization of reproductive media. Mostly ephemeral, single shot shorts, his work is entirely unedited as access to film editing technology was completely restricted. These films comprise a vast career of recollections of memories. Memories that Mr. Light-Friedman did not trust himself to remember unaided by illegal technologies.”

Cut to black.

Huey sits against a triangular structure, fondling a narrow stick. He is surrounded by concrete shapes and specks of green dust. He puffs slowly, inhaling every last bit of the good shit, and savoring the sensation as he exhales the end of the bullshit. A stack of photographs flips over itself in Huey’s hands. Pictures of people. OF dancing and love. Recognitions of a time passed. A time when everyone enjoyed posing for a camera, saying cheese.

A glistening memory floods the backsides of his eyes. He's helpless to stop it. Huey speaks to himself softly:

"The left side of your face is so beautiful." She whispered so softly that I could barely hear. She was laid next to me, the fabric of her Rocawears holding our skin at a distance. My satin dress barely covering me.

"What about the right side?" I asked her. She twitched. A muscle spasm, maybe. Totally random.

"I want to cut you in half. I only want to see your left side." She kissed my left cheek, before unravelling her leg from mine, and reaching for her digital camera beside the bed. She planted both her feet on the floor. Three clicks of her camera lens opened my eyes. "Those were just to test the lighting." She said. I sat up, my back against a pillow. My head against a wall.

She walked to the edge of the bed and kneeled. I asked, "So what about chopping me to bits?" She barely reacted. Her eyes were glued to the OLED display on her digital camera.

"Who said anything about chopping? This isn't a hatchet job. It's art." She answered. The display closed now. She lifted the camera to her eye and looked through the viewfinder. One click. I stared down the lens. I could see her eye through the glass. "There." She said before putting her camera back on the desk.

"There's what?" I was puzzled. She dropped to her knees next to the bed and began to climb up onto the frame. I closed my eyes and laid down on my back, my head now resting on a pillow. She continued to climb, inching closer to my feet. I could feel her breathing on my toes. Her hands glided ever so consistently up my legs and onto my stomach. Her head seamlessly flowed under the skirt of my dress and up through the neckline before stopping at my collar.

"I cut you in half just now. With my camera. I photographed only your left side." She let out a resolute sigh.

"What about my right side? Does it not deserve to be remembered." I asked.

"Oh but it only deserves not to be photographed. Let your right side remain a mystery my love." She responded. My right side was always her favorite, with the left as a close second. My left side deserves to be photographed, remembered for every millimeter of beauty and blemish. My right side, deserves a life of its own. Not to be seen but by my community and god, and everyone in between. She spoke again, "Let the camera look to your right and it'll be the last photo ever taken."

That night, when I was at a rave, I saw camera upon camera. All shapes and sizes. All manner of quality and quantity. My right side was invisible. Painted in blood red. If there will be cameras all around, until the end of time, for my own good, let me save what I can for my love under the satin.

Cut to black

Bass kick.

Camera flash.

Huey steps into the silver shimmer of the shoreline. He sits dawn and reclines on his elbows, leaning against the bank of the river. A reflectively golden rod pierces from the tide, aligned exactly with Huey's angled body.

End.

- Tempest Britt